# UTILIZATION OF A DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENT TOOL (DAT) IN ENHANCING THE ACCURACY OF TAGGING AND DOCUMENTATION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION LEARNERS: BASIS FOR SCHOOL - BASED ASSESSMENT TOOLS

## RATIONALE

Inclusive Education is now fully implemented in the School from Elementary to Senior High School, describing the Public school initiatives ''No one Left Behind'' known as the **''Instituting Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education Republic Act No. 11650, yet the teachers have limited knowledge regarding the inclusion of learners with disabilities in the general education system**.

In this regard, teachers who handle inclusive education and are in a special education program encountered challenges in the processing of tagging SNEd learners in the Learners Information System (LIS) with the proper assessment needed for documentation purposes, and concluded that difficulty was identified. **The Department of Education Region III has the Developmental Assessment Tool (DAT), which is used specifically by a classroom teacher to bridge the gap between the initial observation and medical diagnosis, as an attachment in learners' identification for inclusion.** This study addresses the need for help in a more objective, systematic tool to replace subjective '' guess work'' by the teachers in approving the manifestation of difficulties of SNEd learners for needed academic modification. Administering such assessment tools is one of the services that the guidance office offers, called '' Educational Placement which involves the systematic process of positioning a student in the appropriate grade level, specific subject groups, or **specialized programs, such as Special Needs Education (SNEd) and inclusive education settings (Gladding, 2017)**. A primary example of this service is the transition of a learner from a self-contained classroom to a mainstream environment, a move designed to provide the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) as mandated by inclusive education policies (Department of Education [DepEd], 2021; Heward et al., 2021).

## INSTRUMENT

As the researcher, upon checking the Developmental Assessment Tools (DAT) administration, this tool is not user friendly, with forty-seven (47) pages, and the response is only marked as Observed (O) or Not Observed (NO) within ten minutes rules, a research gap finds in evaluating the consistency and reliability of these mental counts with SNEd learners has no respond marks as ''Not Observed'' . SNEd learners with maladaptive behavior have a delayed response upon observation. This tool is intended for learners exhibiting developmental delays categorized as difficulties, including communication, adaptive skills, hearing, seeing, applying knowledge, and remembering/concentrating. The assessment structure is organized into four key development areas depending on the learner's age.

| DEVELOPMENTAL AGE | AGE | ITEMS |
|---|---|---|
| Language Communication | 1 to 2, 11 and to 12 years | 10-22 per age group |
| Self -Care | 2 to 3 and 8 to 10 years old | 10-21 per age group |
| Motor Skills | Depending on age | 5-19 depending on age |
| Socialization | 1 to 2 and 11 to 12 years old | 10-20 items per age group |

**Based on the guidelines, this tool is designed to be administered by Special Education teachers or general education teachers, while the researcher finds the gaps in why guidance counselor is not listed as the primary administrators of this assessment tool. The guidance counselor's office is suggested as an eligible for conducive setting for the assessment. Yes, what is their role? Why are they not included?**

## PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

**San Jose West Central School – Special Needs Education Center currently employs eight teachers serving one hundred SNEd learners**. Since these educators have already attended the Developmental Assessment Tool (DAT) orientation, they will comprise the respondents group A. The second group will consist of Kindergarten through Grade 6 teachers across San Jose City who serve learners with special needs in inclusive classroom settings or regular classes. The ratio of participants from Group A (SNEd Teachers) is 8, and Group B (Regular Teachers) is also 8 for equal distribution of the instrument (DAT), a total of 16 respondents. Comparing the group A and B respondents' results of the assessment degree of administration and scoring is a factor for assessment tool refinement.

## METHODOLOGY

**The special needs implementers are oriented but not trained to administer this tool.** Researchers find that administration in a classroom may be difficult due to its 47-page length and time-consuming nature. This research aims to make the tool more accessible to teachers handling SNEd learners and reduce administrative burden without sacrificing the depth of the assessment. It is also challenging to find out the degree of teachers' administration and awareness of DAT. The researcher will use Quantitative research in comparing the results of the utilization of developmental assessment tools in LIS tagging and documentation where two groups of teachers use the Developmental Assessment tool: respondents from San Jose West Central – SNEd Center who are trained in handling SNEd learners and regular teachers.

Consequently, this research aims to revise and refine the DAT assessment into a user-friendly, if proven, difficult-to-administer. The limitation of participants in the ratio of 8 from group A and 8 from group B.

The selection of the regular teachers as respondents for group B will be given a questionnaire about the administration of DAT and awareness of attachment in LIS documentation for SNEd learner disability. **The questionnaire consists of a 5-point Likert scale that evaluates how well the teacher understands the protocols, timing, accommodations, and the technical requirements of the test. The selection of respondents from group B will be the highest score from teachers in the elementary schools around San Jose City**. The researcher understands the boundaries of the study to ensure the validity of the results:

The study is limited to 16 total respondents (8 SNEd, 8 Regular), which may limit the generalizability of the findings around San Jose City. The study focuses on the administration and usability of the DAT, not necessarily the creation of a new assessment tool**. Group B is selected based on the highest scores, which means the study reflects the experiences of "high-performing" regular teachers rather than the "average" teacher.**

The result from the experimental group administration will be the key for revising the Developmental Assessment Tools instead of the current binary system, a 4-point scale that tracks **the SNEd learner manifests a behavior, and easy-to-access, condensed to less than 15-page tools work as a school-based assessment tool**.

The respondent will first be given a self-assessment questionnaire to evaluate the level of awareness and proficiency among regular teachers and SNEd teachers in administering the Developmental Assessment Tool (DAT). This instrument was designed to address the identified **gap in standardized administration practices between regular teachers and SNEd teachers, like specialized guidance personnel, ensuring that educators are equipped with the necessary technical skills to facilitate the assessment tool effectively.**

**The respondent Selection ratio are 8 : 8 such as Group A and Group B SNEd Teachers from San Jose West Central School (trained in SNEd but not specifically in DAT administration), and Group B (Control/Comparative): 8 Regular Teachers from San Jose City Elementary schools, selected based on high scores in a preliminary proficiency/awareness questionnaire.**

**Firstly, Self-Assessment: Both groups take a 5-point Likert scale survey to measure their baseline understanding of LIS protocols, accommodations, and technical requirements**. Then: **The Quasi-Experiment: Both groups administer the current DAT. Their results, scoring consistency, and feedback on "degree of difficulty" will serve as the data points for** refinement. Finally, Tool Refinement: The researcher will use the findings to condense the tool to less than 15 pages and convert the scoring to a 4-point scale to capture the nuances of SNEd learner manifestations better.

Statement of the Problem

1. **How do Special Needs Education (SNEd) teachers and regular classroom teachers differ in their administration of the Developmental Assessment Tool (DAT)?**
2. To what extent **does the length of knowledge in the administration of the DAT affect its utilization across teacher groups?**
3. **How does the regular teacher's awareness affect the utilization of DAT compared to the SNEd teachers?**
4. **In what ways does the type of teacher (independent variable: SNEd vs. regular) influence the utilization of assessment tools (dependent variable) for documentation** in the Learners Information System (LIS)?
5. How does DAT utilization help the accuracy of tagging and documentation of learners with difficulties, and what refinements are needed to make the tool more user-friendly for teachers?

*Ms Nebreza*

*I read your proposal. I understand the questions you have raised and would like to answer, however, I do not understand the logic of the research design, comparing the 8 SNED teachers with 8 regular teachers who scored the highest in a preliminary proficiency assessment questionnaire and compare their utilization of the DAT.*

*Please expand your proposal further. I am not familiar with the SNED program .Did I understand correctly the research you would like to do, that based on the assessment of the two groups of teachers in the use of DAT, refinements would be proposed.*

*Discuss further the use of the DAT in identifying learners with special needs, including the categories of disorders.*

*Why do you assume that teachers with high scores in the preliminary assessment would be a better comparison group with SNED teachers who have been trained and oriented in its use.*

*Improve your introduction especially on the DAT since its refinement and improvement seems to be the focus of the study.*

*Make a full blown proposal so that I would have a better understanding of the final output, a school based DAT which is easy to use, shorter and reliable and valid for identifying learners with special needs.*

*Did I understand the research you would like to do?*

*Good luck*

*Soledad Mina Roguel*

*2-10-2026*